

Press Release
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**USAID's Administrator confirms U.S. commitment and support
for Carlos Mesa's government**

The Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Andrew Natsios, congratulated President Mesa for the stable approach he is applying as the head of the Bolivian government and for the coherent economic plan he presented February 2.

During an official visit to Bolivia, Natsios confirmed to president Mesa the ongoing support of the U.S. government for the government of Bolivia, and declared he had come to the country to show the new ways in which USAID has been responding to the priorities and needs of Bolivians. While visiting the Palace of Government, USAID's Administrator announced an additional assistance fund of US\$ 5 million for a new program of immediate support to economic initiatives in El Alto. He also announced the beginning of new programs that will furthermore reach indigenous populations in rural areas.

"Our new strategy in Bolivia aims at supporting the efforts of communities and municipal governments which are involved in the participatory design of projects to increase economic growth, improve social services and achieve a better life condition for the citizens of this country," said Natsios, adding: "We clearly understand the need to include Bolivia's indigenous populations both politically and socially, and the need to strengthen democratic institutions. Therefore, in order to provide direct support Pro País, the program of poverty alleviation recently announced by the Bolivian government, we have expanded our approach to reach indigenous populations and zones that might be prone to social conflicts, such as the city of El Alto, through short-term projects promoting the creation of jobs."

These new efforts are part of a rapid action plan devised by USAID to cooperate with the Bolivian government in providing responses to the needs and priorities of low-income, marginalized sectors. After a recent transference of US\$ 8 million to help the government bridge part of its fiscal gap, thus contributing to the stabilization of the economy, USAID has now expanded the scope of its assistance to promote the inclusion of marginalized sectors and to strengthen democratic institutions.